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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE

Letter dated 15 March 1998 from the Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

I would like to make reference to my statement before the Commission for Human Rights fifty-third session, on the question of the Israeli authorities' responsibility for injecting Palestinian children with the HIV virus. I reiterate here that, in this, we have relied on press reports, as we had explained at the time. We are in the possession of documented information to this effect. The Israeli representative had responded to our statement at the time, relying on press reports which we had not been apprised of. Since the matter is of extreme importance, we have sought to verify our official health sources on the incident. We have been informed by these sources thereafter that the information published in the newspaper reports which we had invoked on the question were not accurate, indeed contradictory, and cannot be relied upon.

Therefore, and on the basis of instructions which I have received, it is wise for us now to rely on the opinion of the official Palestinian health sources on this question as we have explained above, requesting the Commission to kindly take this into consideration, in line with the content of this letter on the whole question.

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The accusations which are contained in the letters by the Representative of Israel, and which have been circulated as official documents to the distinguished members of the Commission, accusations of anti-Judaism, anti-Semitism and racial viewpoints, are but false attempts and constitute flagrant deceit aimed at diverting the Commission's attention from the items of its agenda. These items are of great importance, especially item 4, on the Israeli violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, and the Israeli attempt is to divert the Commission's attention to issues which have no existence except in the empty and hysterical clamour invented by the Representative of Israel in order to sidetrack the Commission from its real work. These attempts are obvious and do not require much effort by way of a reply. If we refer to all my letters and statements before the distinguished Commission, we do not find therein anything that could be construed as anti-Judaism or anti-Jewish faith because I myself am a Muslim, and Islam is the religion of tolerance which respects the other revealed religions. My emphasis has always been on the Israeli practices against the Palestinian people under military Israeli occupation. These practices have been condemned by the Commission and the United Nations General Assembly for many long years. The "anti-Semitism" which the Representative of Israel brandishes on every occasion, has become a ludicrous point which no one should take note of since I myself am a Semite Arab and the Semites are the Muslims, the Christians and the Jews of Arab origin. I am one of them. Other Jews coming from the various parts of the world to Palestine, like those who come from the United States of America and Europe, have nothing whatsoever to do with Semitism. It is not reasonable to believe or to consider that one could be anti-himself or anti his own Semitism.

The Representative of Israel further levies accusations of racism, in an attempt to mask the acts perpetrated by his Government and its occupation authorities and the racist crimes which have reached the point of creating a new system of racial segregation (apartheid) in occupied Palestine, as was the case in South Africa during its former apartheid regime. This is what the Government of Israel is carrying out in the Palestinian territories where it segregates Palestinian villages and cities and where it encircles these with Israeli settlements, exactly like the Bantustans in the former South Africa. A simple review of the Israeli laws like the law on return, the law on the confiscation of lands belonging to absentee landlords, the racist practices and discrimination based on instilling hatred and enmity in the souls of children against Palestinians and the reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) all confirm the racism animating the Israeli State and its institutions. In this respect, I would also like to recall a very recent example. The three Israeli soldiers who shot dead three Palestinian workers and injured nine others on Tuesday of last week have been released without trial, without penalty and without accountability, as if they had performed their national duty in killing Palestinians abiding in this by the law and implementing official instructions. If all this is not racism what is?

The acts perpetrated by the Israeli occupation authorities in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories in the Syrian Golan and the south of Lebanon have exceeded the limits of racism reaching the level of crimes prohibited by international law. The Commission on Human Rights has addressed these crimes and confirmed that they were perpetrated by the Israeli

authorities. These acts have been condemned in the following resolutions, taking into account that these crimes are not subject to limitations, according to the terms of the Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity:

1. Resolution 3 (XXVIII), dated 22 March 1972.

2. Resolution 1983/3, dated 15 February 1983.

3. Resolution 1984/11, dated 29 February 1984.

4. Resolution 1985/1, dated 19 February 1985.

5. Resolution 1985/4, dated 26 February 1985.

6. Resolution 1986/22, dated 10 March 1986.

7. Resolution 1987/2, dated 19 February 1987.

8. Resolution 1988/1, dated 15 February 1988.

9. Resolution 1989/2, dated 17 February 1989.

10. Resolution 1990/6, dated 19 February 1990.

I refer you and the distinguished Commission to the reports of the Committee against Torture, CERD, and the reports of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs in the Occupied Territories. I also refer you to the reports of the successive Secretaries-General of the United Nations over the previous years to refresh your memories on the long series of grave violations and crimes committed by the Israeli occupation authorities, crimes which continue to be committed until today against the Palestinian people. The daily viewing of television screens which transmit to us the game of death forced upon the Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli occupation forces exonerate my statements of any possible doubts.

I should be grateful if you could circulate this letter as an official document to the members of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission for Human Rights, under item 4 of its agenda.

(Signed): Nabil RAMLAWI
Ambassador
Permanent Observer for Palestine
to the United Nations